

Learning from Serrano Documentation

A century of best and not-so-best practices

Introduction

- Serrano language has few speakers left
- Hard to get new language data
- Past documentation from
 - community members
 - linguists, anthropologists
 - other academic fields
 - amateurs
- Our efforts are enabled and constrained by past research
- Issues we are facing as a result



California Indian Library Collections

Traditional Serrano Territory

Population at Contact: 15-20,000

Speakers today: 2 (English dominant)

Background

- Ernest Siva
 - Morongo Band of Mission Indians
 - tribal elder and historian
 - Founder of the Dorothy Ramon Learning Center
- Serrano Language Revitalization Project
 - San Manuel Band of Mission Indians
 - community language project
 - part of the Tribe's Education Department

Goals of Project

- Documentation
 - for the Serrano community, not academic community
 - original documentation
 - (late) Pauline Murillo
 - Ernest Siva
 - archival/literature research
 - community members
 - linguistically trained academics
 - non-linguistically trained academics
 - amateurs
- Revitalization
 - dictionary
 - grammar textbook
 - classes

Siva's Work

- Personal knowledge
 - grew up in Serrano speaking household
 - published book of Serrano songs
- Documentation of past speakers
 - kept journals of mother and aunt for 20 years
 - didn't use audio recorder (they didn't like it)
 - always some new word or new use
 - expressions you do not hear anymore
 - things that do not translate well
- Collaboration with SLRP
 - weekly meetings
 - review material (audio, text)
 - correct mistakes, expand on topics, teach new things

Practices and Consequences

- How do past documenters' practices affect our understanding of Serrano?
 - quality of material
 - coverage of material
 - reliability of material
 - context of documentation

Audio Quality

- Guy Tyler recordings of 4 Serrano speakers
 - 43 recordings, 1960s-70s
 - spotless sound quality, well taken care of
 - **best audio recordings of Serrano**
- Wick Miller recorded anonymous Serrano woman
 - 6 word elicitations, 1950s
 - good sound quality, stored and digitized by UC Berkeley
 - Miller himself not miked well, so hard to understand prompts
- Kenneth Hill recorded Sarah Martin and Louis Marcus
 - 20 narratives, 8 word/phrase lists, 1965-67
 - not professionally stored, quality degraded
 - professionally cleaned to restore quality
 - **best verifiable source of grammar of the language**



Organization of Notes

- C. Hart Merriam
 - naturalist
 - worked with speakers of from San Manuel and Morongo
 - well-organized notes
 - easy to find information

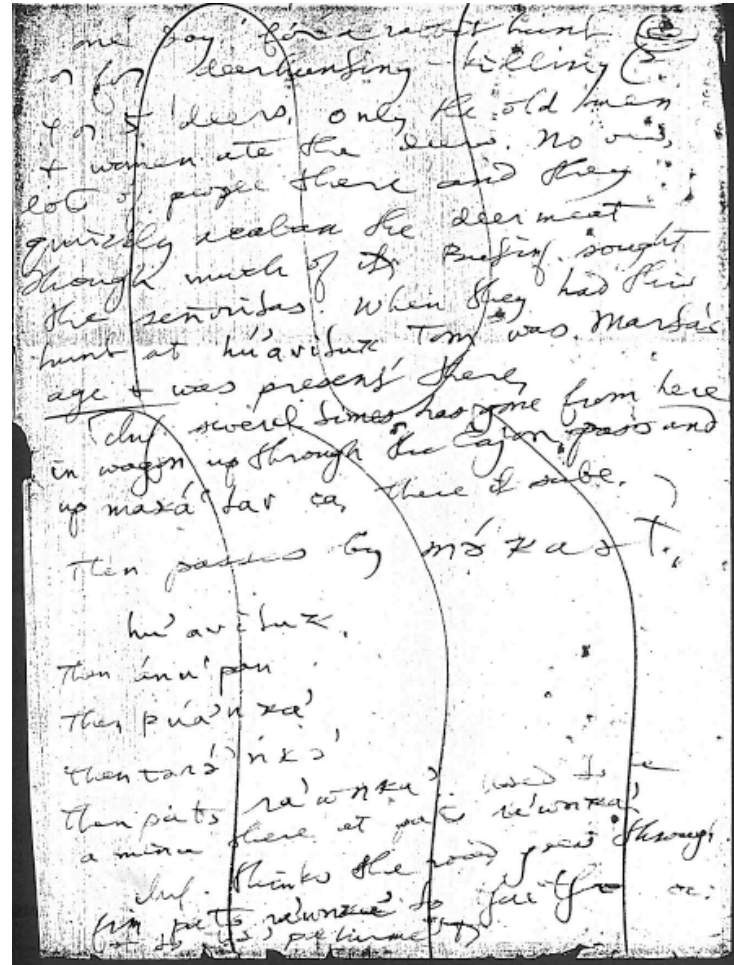
15

REPTILES AND BATRACHIANS.

Snake (any)	Tah-hot	Her'ing-ah (Tā-to-kut-tum)
Rattlesnake (<i>Crotalus</i>)	Her'nkt	Her'nkt
Water snake (<i>Eutania</i>)		Pah'-ter
King or milk snake (<i>Ophibolus boylii</i>)		Pah'-no-wah't Pah'-no-hwah't
Red ringed snake (<i>Ophibolus zonatus</i>)		
Gopher or bull snake (<i>Pityophis</i>)		Ko'-kwests
Whip snake (<i>Bascanion</i>)		
Red Racer (<i>Zamenis frenatus</i>)		Tah-hot 'snake'
Chuckwalla (<i>Sauromalus ater</i>)	Chakkt	Chak'-ter
Small brown lizard (<i>Uta</i>)		
Scaly lizard (<i>Sceloporus</i>)	Chah'ngt	Chahng't
Alligator lizard (<i>Gerrhonotus</i>)	Tā-kwir'-ah-kwe	
Leopard lizard (<i>Crotaphytus wislizeni</i>)	Tik-wis'-ah-kwe	Tik-wis'-kwe
Collared lizard (<i>Crotaphytus baileyi</i>)		Tep'-pah-söl
Skink (<i>Eumeces</i>)	mah'-wo-vit	mah'-wo-vi
<i>Cnemidophorus tigris</i>	Chah-lah'-ko	
Horned toad (<i>Phrynosoma</i>)	Nah-kwah'-te	Too-par-hwe Too-rar-hv
Turtle	Land turtle Koop-pert	Yu'-ak'-ter-wah Koo-pert
Frog (<i>Rana</i>)	Wah-kaht-tum	Wah'-kut
Toad (<i>Bufo</i>)		
Salamander		

Organization of Notes

- J. P. Harrington
 - anthropologist
 - worked mostly at San Manuel, some Morongo
 - notes are mostly stream of consciousness
 - very hard to find information
 - we are getting them transcribed to improve search-ability



Redundancies vs. Gaps

- Redundant data: different documenters sometimes covered the same material
 - the good: allows us to verify information
 - “My X is killing me” = “I have an X-ache”
 - wamat h^waačkih^wa’t “raccoon” (lit. “tree ladder”)
 - the bad: the more overlap, the less new data
- Gaps in data: things documenters missed
 - Scarce lexical information about
 - astronomy, geology, religion, military, music, craftwork
 - linguists kept using the same easy verbs and nouns for examples
 - Crook compiled 2100 words, < 100 unique

Depth vs. Breadth

- Depth – comprehensiveness of a particular domain
 - Non-linguists tended to delve into particular topics
 - lacked the skills to transcribe words or understand grammar
 - Linguists tended to delve into grammar, not the lexicon
 - often lack specialized knowledge for accurate translation
- Breadth – how many domains were covered
 - Linguists covered many domains
 - Ramon and Elliott – 721 texts across all kinds of topics
 - Community members have good breadth
 - record what is around them
 - Non-linguist academics did not stray much from their topics

Reliability

- Linguists
 - very reliable for transcription and grammar
 - not always as reliable for specialized domains of knowledge
 - species identification by linguists not very reliable
 - frequently miss cultural background
- Non-linguists
 - very reliable for their fields
 - not very reliable for transcription or understanding phrases
- Community members
 - not always reliable for pronunciation of words
 - excellent information on culture and history
- Sometimes we can cross-check these for improved accuracy
- Sometimes we can't

Reliability



Pümüvü' m raak^w. Kiič Atiü'avi m raak^w.

Literal: They ate on them. They ate at the Big House.

Better: They ate in their honor. They ate in honor of the
Big House

Verifiability

- How do we know other people got their data right?
- Collaboration between SLRP and Ernest Siva
 - Confirm or change translations
 - Check pronunciation
 - Discuss other uses of same word
 - Explain missing background information
- Audio recordings
 - Hill has graciously given us copies of all his recordings so we can verify his transcriptions and translations
- Specimen collection
 - Harrington irregularly collected specimens of plants and rocks
 - Lerch (anthropologist) inspected those plant specimens for species identification

Metadata

It is often important to know the context of data collection to reconstruct missing information.

- Harrington (clear)
- “When at Big Meadows about the seventeenth of October and about 10 o’clock p.m., Tomas showed me the constellation túkumjiva’t in the northern heavens just to the left of Cassiopoea. It is a gigantic triangle with base fairly horizontal just to the left and a little below Cassiopoea and of greater diameter than the entire length of Cassiopoea.”
- Harrington (unclear)
- “There is a similar large rattlesnake, they said, that lives at the foot of Məkat mountain (across valley from here) in a dry wash. It goes about at night and is then seen.”
- We don’t know where “here” or Məkat is.

Take-aways for Documenters

- A lot of the work we have to do would be easier if linguists and other specialists coordinated the first time around
- Something is better than nothing, but organized data, audio recordings, and specimens will help later documenters and revitalizers
- Try to cover new lexical ground
- Work with “less than perfect” speakers, because they have much to contribute

Take-aways for Communities

- There may be more information out there than you think
- Reach out to specialists in other fields, not just linguists and anthropologists
- Reach out to non-academics; they may have skills that make their documentation superior to others
- Record the expressions you hear around the house that experts may not have access to

‘Ivi’ ‘Ayee’

Joseph Henderer

jhenderer@sanmanuel-nsn.gov

Ernest Siva

siva@dishmail.net

Marcus Smith

msmith1@sanmanuel-nsn.gov